



Feedback in Non-Verbal Communication and Level of Understanding: An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the relations between feedback and communication are investigated. More specifically the important applications of feedback in oral communication are tried to be understood. The central idea of communication is to increase commonality or sharing of information among participants. In the participatory communication or in two-way communication, feedback helps to determine the level of acceptance, understanding, and impact of the message on the receiver. To frame a feedback of message and to interpret feedback message in communication is always a challenging and demanding one. So the present study aims at determining the relationship between "levels of understanding" or the impact of a message and the "nonverbal feedback" in face-to-face oral communication.

KEYWORDS : Communication, Feedback, Nonverbal Feedback, Face-to-Face Oral Communication

Introduction

In the present era, communication plays a central role in all the aspects of life. "Communication is a process of sending and receiving information. It is a vehicle through which we develop, maintain and improve human relationships." (Aggarwal, Gupta, Mittal, 2002, P. 3) Communication can be called as the discipline of both science and arts. "Art functions by communication of a symbol, meant to convey information and/or evoke an emotional response." (Hoffmann 2011, P.184) "The Science of communication provides a body of principles which can guide the managers to find solutions to the specific problems and objective evaluation of result." (Rayudu, 2010, P.6) Like food, cloth and shelter, communication is a fundamental need of human being. "Right to communicate whether actively or passively is essential basic need. Human beings cannot survive without communicating." (Narula, 1994, P.2) In all types of communication, factors like feedback or mutual exchange of message are given more priority for an effective or successful communication. "When there is active communication, the effort is for interaction, interchange, dialogue and mutual understanding." (Narula, 1994, P.1) The scope of instant feedback for mutual understanding can be easily identified in most common public communication method that is oral communication. "A face to face communication gives an opportunity of observing facial expressions, reactions and gives effective feedback on the matter. The acceptance and rejection can be better understood and necessary clarification can be given." (C.S.Rayudu, 2010, P.100) Here a question arises to what extent one can figure out the impact of a message from the nonverbal feedback of the receiver. Is the level of understanding of receiver about the received message has any relation with his /her nonverbal feedback or not. Therefore, this research is an effort to understand the relation between the level of understanding and nonverbal feedback in oral communication.

Objective of the Study

Following are the basic objectives of this study

1. To understand whether receiver's misunderstanding about a message have any relation with their negative nonverbal feedback or not and vice-verse.
2. To determine the link between feedback and the level of understanding during oral communication.
3. To determine to what extent level of understanding or acceptance of message can be predicted from the nonverbal feedback of receiver.

Hypotheses

This study can proceed with the analysis of following two hypotheses

1. In oral communication there is a significant relation exists between "level of understanding" and "positive nonverbal feedback".
2. In the oral communication, there is a significant relation exists between "level of understanding" and "negative nonverbal feedback".

Conceptualisation Communication

Communication word is drawn from "communis" (Latin derivation) which means common. (Aggarwal, Gupta, Mittal, 2002, P.3) According to this, literally, meaning can be determined as communication is always related to sharing of information and development of common understanding between sender and receiver.

Feedback

Feedback is an important element in the communication process as it determines the impact, acceptance of the message. "A communication process is said to have feedback when the receiver of the message has given his response to the sender's message." (Rayudu, 2010, P. 206) "In simple words, feedback can be defined as the response that a receiver makes to the message and is generally what is described by the sender after sending a message." (JAIN, Mukherji, 2012, P. 66) Feedback also gives direction to improve or change sender's future communication strategy. Hence, it is essential to study further various aspects of feedback.

Positive and Negative feedback. Feedback can be of two type one is negative and another one is positive. "Positive feedback is saying that we like, appreciate and value the speaker's ideas." (Barker, 2010:72) Some feedbacks are can be called as negative feedback. When a receiver agrees with the message or understands message he/she gives a positive feedback.

"In the case of negative feedback, there is always some resistance and some degree of unwillingness in its acceptance." (Rayudu, 2010, P.209) When the receiver is unable to understand or reject any message, he/she tempted to send a negative feedback. Naturally, the receiver sends negative feedback to clarify, to protest, to so dissatisfaction regarding the message.

Nonverbal Feedback. Nonverbal communication means communicating without words. It can be defined as "messages expressed by non-linguistic means. This rules out sign languages and written words, but it includes message transmitted by vocal means that does not involve language –the sighs, laughs, and other associated noises." (Roland, Russell 2007, P.132)

When receivers have less scope to communicate feedback verbally he or she has scope to communicate feedback in a nonverbal way. This could be interpreted as a feedback of the message. This nonverbal feedback is one of the important factors in the concerned research. Dr Marayan Rodrigues says about five major forms of nonverbal media like Proxemics (Spatial), kinesics (Facial expressions, Postures, Body moments, Gestures, Eye contacts, Heptics [touch]), chronemics (temporal or use of time), paralingual (vocal cues) and artifactual (objective language). The receiver can transmit nonverbal feedback in any of this medium.

Face to Face Oral communication

Face to face oral communication is the most important mode of communication for a human being. Communication becomes two-way with the help of feedback. "The reaction of the receiver of the message can be assessed effectively in oral communication than through written communication." (Rayudu, 2010, P.207)

Oral communication is widely used throughout the world. As it is also easier to detect and analyses nonverbal feedback during face-to-face oral communication, it is decided to study the relation between feedback and level of understanding in oral communication instead of another communication process. "Feedback is a process to ascertain whether or not the receiver properly understood the message, in which the superior has to listen, answer, interpret and amend the message. Interface and interaction are possible in feedback .It avoids errors in the transmission of a message and in invoking effective participation."(Rayudu, 2010, P.207-208)

Even though in face-to-face verbal communication communicator can get both verbal and nonverbal feedback but here research is only concentrated on nonverbal feedback. Nonverbal feedbacks can be instantly noticed from a receiver.

In some situation, it is difficult to understand nonverbal communication but to a great extent, one can understand nonverbal feedback from the receiver by general observation. In this study, it is tried to figure out to what extent nonverbal feedback can have a relation with the level of understanding on received message.

Research Design

Nature of the Study

This study is empirical in nature and involves assessing the relation between the level of understanding of receiver about sender's message and nonverbal feedback in oral communication. The study is conducted in some natural condition where oral communication frequently takes place. Selectively the required data are collected from the places like a classroom, tea stall and spiritually gathering places where face-to-face oral communication generally happens. The study was conducted among different age groups.

Sampling

The scope of the present study was limited to the students of standard 3rd to 8th of Sri Aurobindo Purnanga Sikhya Kendra, Koraput. The students from class 9th to 12th were taken from JNV Koraput, graduation students from 'School of Basic Sciences & Information Sciences of the Central University of Orissa, postgraduate students from 'School of Languages' from Central University of Orissa and Research Scholars of Central University of Orissa, Koraput. Research scholars (RS), postgraduates (PG), undergraduates (UG) and students of class 12th, 11th, 10th, 9th, 8th, 7th, 6th, 5th, 4th and 3rd have taken to form the population of the study. The total population of the study was around 1000 but there are differences exist among the individual schools and classes.

In order to overcome this numerical difference, it was decided to take the minimum samples of eight (four girls and four boys) from the each class. So a sample size of 136 students was selected for the data collection. Out of 136, some responses were not usable because they left most of the questions unanswered and faces were not clearly visible in the video clips. Therefore, only 107 numbers of respondents are considered for the analysis.

A simple random sampling technique was used to figure out the sample size of the study.

Research techniques

In the present study, data collection has done by using observation and interview techniques.

In this study through participatory observation method, nonverbal feedbacks were recorded through a video camera while the sender (teacher, speaker) was communicating the message (story, idea, thought) to the receiver. Then the respondents were requested to fill the questionnaire and from which level of understanding about the oral message was determined. Finally, to verify the collected fact, interview technique was used.

In the present work, questionnaire technique was used to collect data on respondent's age, class, their state of mind, liking and disliking etc. It informed about the level of understanding of respondents on given message during observation.

Data Analysis

For a proper analysis, the recorded videos of respondents were cut into 60 clips with the help of video editing software. Then manually the nonverbal responses of each respondent from each clip were observed. This observation was conducted by more than two observers.

The questionnaire was containing 20 questions based on the message. The number of correct answers was reflecting their level of understanding on the given oral message. **Hypothesis Testing**

Analysis plan

Along with the level of understanding, all other information like age, sex, class, opinion, nonverbal feedback was categorised, codified and recorded in SPSS package (22 version). For drawing inferences, Pearson Correlation was used. This test was used with .05 level of confidence. For the testing, the hypothesis statistical correlations were used. Statistical correlation is a statistical technique that informs us if two variables are related or not. Correlations can tell us about the relationship between variables. It is used to understand whether the relationship is positive or negative and the strength of the relationship.

Hypothesis 1

In the oral communication, there is a significant relation between "level of understanding" and "positive nonverbal feedback".

Ho-There is no statistically significant correlation exists between "level of understanding" and "positive nonverbal feedback" in face-to-face oral communication (specifically in one-to-many types).

Table 1 Correlation Result

		LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING	NONVERBAL POSITIVE FEEDBACK
LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING	Pearson Correlation	1	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	107	107
NONVERBAL POSITIVE FEEDBACK	Pearson Correlation	.869**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	107	107

** .Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the above table, the result is found that there is a significant positive correlation exists between the level of understanding" and "nonverbal positive feedback" that is $r(105) = .869, p=.000$.

Since P value is .000 it is less than .05 so here Ho (Null Hypothesis) is rejected and Ha (alternative hypothesis) is accepted. That means enough statistical evidence are there to say that there is a statistical significance correlation exists between "level of understanding" and "nonverbal positive feedback".

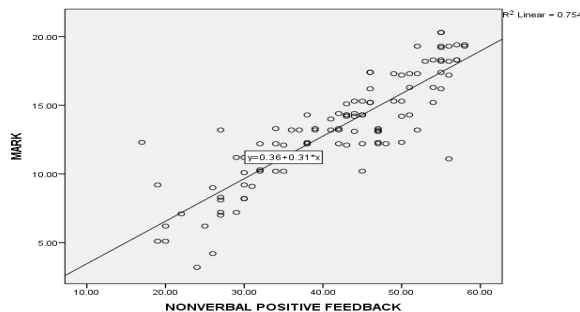
If the situation will be $P > .05$ then we would fail to reject the Ho (Null hypothesis), the null will stand, and the Ha (alternative hypothesis) must be rejected.

As $r' = .869$, this is a positive correlation coefficient. It means there is a positive correlation exists between the "level of understanding" and "nonverbal positive feedback". This means that "level of understanding" increases with "positive nonverbal feedback" in a proportional ratio. This can be explained that those individual are giving positive nonverbal feedback, they are listening and understanding the given message.

As per statistical point of view if the r-value is between -1.0 to -0.5 or 1.0 to 0.5 then strength or relationship between the variables is relatively stronger. Here 'r' value is .869 and it is in between 1.0 to 0.5. This shows the stronger relationship between "level of understanding" and "positive nonverbal feedback" of the receiver.

Now let's observe this relation between "level of understanding" and "nonverbal positive feedback" in a scatter graph.

Graph 1



The data displayed on the graph resembles a line rising from left to right. Since the slope of the line is positive, there is a positive correlation exists between the two sets of data. This scatters graph shows the relation between "level of understanding" and "nonverbal positive feedback". This relation is quite strong because all the data points are going on a single straight line. This means that according to this set of data, the better level of understanding can be determined from more nonverbal positive feedback giving respondent. From this result, during face-to-face oral communication level of understanding/acceptance or effect of a message can be predicted/detected or calculated from the positive nonverbal feedback of the receiver. This is statistically confirmed by this test.

Hypothesis 2

In the oral communication, there is a significant relation exists between "level of understanding" and "negative nonverbal feedback".

Ho-There is no statistically significant correlation exists between "level of understanding" and "negative nonverbal feedback" in face-to-face oral communication (specifically in one-to-many types).

Table 2 Correlation Result

	LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING	NONVERBAL NEGATIVE FEEDBACK
LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING	1	-.869**
Pearson Correlation		.000
Sig. (2-tailed)		107
N	107	107
NONVERBAL NEGATIVE FEEDBACK	-.869**	1
Pearson Correlation	.000	
Sig. (2-tailed)		107
N	107	107

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the table 4.7, the result is found that there is a significant negative correlation exists between "level of understanding" and "negative nonverbal feedback" that is: $r(105) = -.869, p=.000$.

Since P value is .000 it is less than .05 so here Ho (Null Hypothesis) is rejected and Ha (alternative hypothesis) is accepted. That means there is enough statistical evidence to say that there is a statistical significance correlation exists between "level of understanding" and "negative nonverbal feedback".

As 'r' = -.869, this is a negative correlation coefficient. It means there is a negative correlation exists between the "level of understanding" and "negative nonverbal feedback". This means that "negative nonverbal feedback" decreases with "level of understanding" in a proportional ratio.

This can be explained that those individual are giving negative nonverbal feedback, they are not listening and understanding the given message.

From this result during face-to-face oral communication, the level of understanding/Acceptance or effect of a message can be predicted/detected or calculated from the negative nonverbal feedback of receiver. This is also statistically confirmed by this test.

From above two tests (Test1 and Test 2), it is statistically confirmed that there is a strong relation exists between "level of understanding" and "nonverbal feedback".

Interpretation of Statistical Result

Let's now find the percentage to what extent one can predict the level of understanding of others from nonverbal message while doing face to face oral communication.

If the $r = +1.0$ it describes a perfect positive correlation and if $r = -1.0$ describes a perfect negative correlation between the variables. The result of the study shows that $r' = +/- .869$. Its percentage from the perfect correlation $+/- 1.0$ would be $1 / .869 * 100 = 86.9\%$.

It means up to 86.0% effect of message or level of understanding can be determined from nonverbal feedback while communication is face to face.

Falsification

The statistical result does not show the relationship between nonverbal feedback and level of understanding as 100% instead of 86.0%. In the following situations, this relation between the level of understanding and nonverbal feedback cannot be detected.

If individuals consciously try to show as if they are attentive towards the sender, but in reality, they are not.

mentality or state of mind of the receiver

Communication Training

Only trained communicator can easily detect the level of understanding from nonverbal feedback. That detection helps the sender to communicate the message more easily and perfectly. Techniques like 'prediction of the level of understanding' and 'concentration of receiver on message' from the eye and body movement of the receiver should be developed. Continuity of emotion, body and expression gives a clear-cut idea about nonverbal feedback. Pre and post relation in the feedback of receiver are also an important thing to notice while communication is face to face. While predicting the types of feedback sender must try the level best to enter themselves into respondents' mind and to their imagination level.

Conclusion

The main purpose of communication is to communicate. Communication can be done properly with proper feedback. Feedback fulfils the aim of communication and improves future communication procedure. This study opens several ways to understand the message properly by feedback. The study proved the relation of feedback in nonverbal communication and level of understanding Hence it is proved that by understanding feedback properly, the message will be better understood. By this, the real motto of communication will be fulfilled.

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